



**WisDOT/Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation  
Friday, June 18, 2004  
Madison, WI**

People in Attendance

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation

Paul Zimmerman,  
Government Relations Executive Director

Sabrina Gentile,  
Government Relations Director

Wisconsin DOT

Sandy Beaupre  
WisDOT Bureau of Planning

Jonquil Johnston  
WisDOT Bureau of Planning

1. Overview of WisDOT's meeting purpose and WisDOT's long-range plan, Connections 2030, by WisDOT staff: The meeting began at 9:05 with introductions. Ms. Beaupre gave an overview of WisDOT's long-range plan Connections 2030. WisDOT is seeking input on transportation planning issues from larger Wisconsin cities at this point. Connections 2030 is scheduled to be completed in 2006. Handouts were provided to Ms. Gentile and Mr. Zimmerman.
2. Gathering of input from the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation: Ms. Gentile gave WisDOT copies of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau's 2004 State Policy booklet. One section, beginning on page 3, specifies the Farm Bureau's position on transportation issues. The Farm Bureau supports using highway user taxes and vehicle sales taxes only for highway construction and maintenance purposes, including rural bridge improvements. They feel user fees and private money are better funding sources for alternative forms of public transportation, such as light rail.

Maintenance of state and county highways and county and town roads is very important to the agricultural economy. They would like to see a greater emphasis on improvement and maintenance of existing transportation facilities than on new highway construction. Agricultural preservation is vital to Farm Bureau members and they encourage using existing rights-of-way whenever possible for new construction or transportation improvements. Even when a highway does not take up much land with a new alignment, it can separate and disconnect farm tracts, making movement from one parcel to the next more difficult. The Farm Bureau would like to see WisDOT treat agricultural land with the same degree of effort used to mitigate wetland destruction during construction of transportation facilities.

The Farm Bureau supports state highways aids to towns are more equitable with cities and villages on a per mile basis.

The Farm Bureau supports allowing wider driveways for easier access to farmers' yards from state highways. The Farm Bureau recognizes that farm equipment on highways, particularly in urbanizing areas, can create safety and traffic flow issues, however, farm to market access is an important part of

Wisconsin's economy. They urge farmers to use caution and courtesy when traveling with farm equipment on public roadways and to pull over to the side of the road when possible to allow traffic to pass.

The Farm Bureau would like to see owners of farmland protected from increased value assessments due to unwanted road improvements, similar to the way a farmer is sheltered from sewer and water assessments.

The Farm Bureau notes that railroads are essential to the movement of agricultural goods from Wisconsin Farms to markets. They support upgrading and improvements to the rail system. When railroads are abandoned, the party taking them over should have to live up to the same responsibilities as the railroad for such things as weed control and fence maintenance. The Farm Bureau opposes granting a government agency the right of first refusal to buy abandoned right-of-way or other land. They support the land reverting back to adjacent landowners. The Farm Bureau opposes closing down town roads and private access roads for the railroad's benefit.

The Farm Bureau recognizes the importance of a multi-modal freight transportation system. They encourage the trucking and railroad industry to work together to improve the efficiency of product movement. During the discussion of the corridors concept of Connections 2030, the Farm Bureau noted that WisDOT should look for rail and other types of freight corridors from Wisconsin production facilities to processing and distribution centers in other states, for instance, the rail corridor through central Wisconsin to La Salle, Illinois.

Regulations relating to vehicle and load weights and lengths are of interest to the Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau recommends that gross weight limitations on all farm trucks be permanently increased by 15% during harvest time when moving crops from the field to their first point of storage or processing on all highways. In addition, often the season for higher weight limits must be extended due to late starts in crop planting during the spring.

The Farm Bureau recommends all state highways be open to all trucks meeting the state length and weight limitations. They support allowing the shipment of agricultural commodities on 53-foot trailers.

The Farm Bureau coordinates their lobbying efforts on transportation issues, particularly rural transportation issues, with the Wisconsin Towns Association and the Wisconsin Counties Association.